

In the church I served in Jefferson, TX, one of my members had a pool in her back yard. Many evenings in the summer, you would find me over at Lottie Call's in the pool. It was a great way to get some exercise on sweltering summer days! After forty-five minutes or so, I felt so much more relaxed and my stress had floated away. Lottie often invited folks over to join us, but not many took her up on the invitation. A lot of women said the same thing. "Oh, you don't want to see me in a bathing suit!" Honestly, once we were in the water, we couldn't see them in their bathing suit! It made us sad that people pass up the chance to float their stress away with us because they worried about what we might think about their bodies in a bathing suit. (They should see mine!)

Our culture is so obsessed with how we look! I read a story about how women are having cosmetic surgery on their feet because they don't like the way they looked. One woman thought one of her toes was too long. Joan Brumberg, a professor at Cornell University decided to look at the changes in how young women talked about themselves over the years. First, she looked at diaries written by young women a hundred years ago, in the early 1900s. What she found is that they spent a good deal of time writing about how to be a good person, a useful, caring, positive contributor to society. They had goals and aspirations and a personal sense of mission that caused them to reach beyond themselves. Then, she looked at diaries from young women of today, a hundred years later. They had aspirations too – mostly to be slim, pretty and popular.

In 1 Samuel 16, God sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a new king from among the sons of Jesse. God doesn't tell Samuel which one it will be ahead of time. When Samuel sees the first of Jesse's sons, he is sure that this fine specimen of manhood is the Lord's anointed, but God says, "Not so fast. I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the outside, like humans do, but on the heart." One by one, Jesse's sons come before Samuel and none of them are suitable. However, Jesse has one more, the youngest, not important enough to be included in the feast with the great prophet and left tending the sheep. "Send for him!" Samuel orders. When David enters the room, God says, "Here he is! Anoint him!"

God isn't worried about how slim, pretty or popular we are. God doesn't look at how we fit into our swimsuits. God looks beyond all these things to our hearts. What are your goals and aspirations? Do you have a sense of mission, a desire to be a useful, caring, positive disciple? Don't worry about what you wear or how you look. Focus on the things that are important to God, the things of the heart.